

**South Downtown Advisory Group**  
**Meeting #1 July 7, 2005**  
**Draft Notes**

**OVERALL SUMMARY:** DPD introduced the study effort and provided an overview of the planning context. The group members introduced themselves, describing their relationship to the area and their thoughts about a better future for the area. As summarized by one member, the overall themes included:

- economic vitality and opportunity;
- enhanced neighborhood livability (including new residential presence and a safer, more pleasant public environment);
- dealing with transportation accessibility;
- addressing historic preservation issues (maintaining authenticity yet integrating the new);
- promoting a community spirit.

Other thoughts included:

- maintaining a role for industrial uses in the City's economy;
- addressing the area's infrastructure repair and improvement needs;
- enhancing existing housing stock and other buildings, to avoid problems with neglected buildings;
- seeking bold solutions and consideration of environmental sustainability principles

**Introductory Remarks – Diane Sugimura**

DPD Director Diane Sugimura welcomed the group, and gave a broad overview of its purpose. She thanked participants for their commitment and interest. She spoke about the area's energetic and diverse qualities and how South Downtown relates to the Mayor's Center City Planning agenda. It is the next step in Center City planning work that has included South Lake Union and Downtown. She mentioned DPD's cooperative work with Parks, SDOT and other city departments. She mentioned the transit hub and convergence of transportation systems in this area. She advised the group to: listen carefully to different perspectives; keep an open mind to new ideas; and think creatively about the future.

**Planning Study Objectives – John Rahaim**

John Rahaim introduced the planning context and study objectives. He underlined the primary emphasis on housing, with additional interests in job growth, and making the area more attractive and livable. The Neighborhood Plans are a starting point for the discussions, but in some cases this group may wish to expand upon those plans' themes.

John noted that identifying land use and zoning opportunities are a primary objective, along with related questions about neighborhood character, sustainability, and coordination between the public and private sector. The level of environmental review will depend upon the level of change evaluated. Additional urban design and/or economic analysis might be pursued. The City will not make this an endless process, nor allow for scope creep. Gary Johnson added that an

interdepartmental team of city staff will meet regularly to address many non-land use issues that will arise.

### **Advisory Group Introductions**

In this meeting segment, the advisors introduced themselves by describing their relationship to the area, and their vision for the best future of the South Downtown area.

***Tuck Eng*** – As a longtime resident, business and property owner in Chinatown, he'd like to see the area revitalized, with the ability of all to participate in and enjoy the area together.

***Tom Im*** – As a staffer for Inter-Im and neighborhood planning participant, he sees residential density as a core issue, and is pushing for zoning changes to increase the diversity of housing choices for various income levels and household types including families. Better open spaces and streetscape improvements are desirable for a more livable area. A school also would be a great addition. Seeing new development fit in with the existing architecture and increased environmental sustainable practices are also goals.

***Chris Koh*** – Seeking a vibrant place for all cultures to use and reside in. Right now the area lacks enough evening activities and overall diversity.

***Mike Peringer*** – Thinks we need to address a number of short-term issues to get to the better future condition, namely traffic congestion and land use problems. We need a pathway and leadership from City of Seattle to get there. In the SODO industrial area, typical daily concerns are the ability to get to work on congested streets, freight mobility and the ability to conduct one's business.

***John Odland*** – As an industrial business representative, he notes that economic diversity is important for the city and region. He'd like us to consider how Seattle's industrial areas can continue to work in the regional economic context (maintain zoning for ugly companies too). Efficient use of Seattle's industrial areas is a good alternative to developing outlying greenfields with industrial uses. He notes the disjointed transportation systems and freight movement priorities, and hopes solutions for those don't get lost in the mix.

***Ann Kawasaki*** – She hopes for a vibrant neighborhood that is a destination for all kinds of visitors. Seeks integrated patterns of development that are complementary to what is there now. She agreed with Mike Peringer on the need to address access/egress concerns, and the desire for a truly integrated transportation system.

***Fraser Black*** – He hopes for a critical mass of residential development that will change the area for the better, with the benefits of additional residential presence, services for those residents, the ability to live without a car, and a safe environment to work and live in.

***Greg Smith*** – As a concerned citizen interested in the health of the planet and good management of growth, he'd like us to think outside the box on community design. We should address areas that have been neglected and underused. We should take advantage of this area's existing good infrastructure, and take advantage of the developing transit hub by putting in as much housing as

we can. He'd like to see an "environmental overlay" be incorporated into the City's zoning that would serve as a world example for how to grow sustainably, for example, being carbon-neutral and off the electrical grid.

**Tony Scott** – Would like to see a balanced neighborhood with a mix of retail and housing, a good mixture of housing types, with lots of transportation possibilities. Would like to see the area be a destination, with great walkability, good scale and architectural quality in new buildings. Would also like to see the integration of new architectural styles into what is already there.

**Rick Friedhoff** – He likes the diversity, scale and historic character of the area today, and would like to see the area work better than it does today. He is aware of the economic struggles of the last ten years that have impeded positive changes, and knows that solutions will have to work economically.

**Sarah Lewontin** – She advocates for more workforce housing to improve the area's conditions and the diversity of its residents. It would be great if people of all ages could live there affordably and enjoy it. She'd like to see the existing buildings and uses preserved but augmented by new buildings. She'd like to feel more safe and comfortable in walking through the area at night, and have more access to groceries and other resident-serving amenities.

**Joan Enticknap** – She echoes the thoughts of all the speakers. As an advocate for the baseball Public Facilities District, she'd like to ensure that actions we take will enhance and support the multimillion dollar investments we've made in transit hubs and stadiums.

**Clyde MacIver** – The Seattle Mariners are interested in seeing an enhanced environment in the ballpark vicinity, with additional retail, residential and supporting services. This will help make the area a better destination with more to do, creating more business patronage and more time spent in the neighborhoods. He recognizes the complexity of the area's use with lots of Port activity, trucks and railroad traffic. His key interests are that the area will have good transportation infrastructure, and a use pattern with compatible uses. He knows it will be a challenge.

**Bert Gregory** – He recognizes that we should seize the opportunity to do something special here, that will show people how to grow in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. There are opportunities to plan for sustainable futures. He recognizes and appreciates the uniqueness and distinctive qualities of these areas, and would like to build upon those qualities. He'd prefer to see more neighborhood-enhancing places for people and families, including elegant and delightful public spaces and good systems for pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles.

**Mimi Sheridan** – Although she has worked extensively in neighborhood planning and historic preservation, she hadn't identified one particular vision for the future of the area. Key concerns include housing, traffic congestion and accessibility, livability and jobs. At this time when a lot is happening throughout the area, it appears the main need is to determine "what happens where." She doesn't see new buildings as incompatible with historic preservation goals.

***Jerry Chihara*** – He echoes the thoughts of others. As an advocate for historic preservation, he sees a priority as enhancing the housing stock we already have, as well as other existing buildings. This will help repair the foundation and provide a solid foundation for future growth. It will help move the neighborhoods away from the bad effects of neglected properties.

***Steve Bull*** – He'd like to see the public perceive this area as part of Downtown and the Center City, not just a peripheral area. In other words, seek to move the threshold of the Downtown environment to the edges of this area. Thinking about future development, he knows there are many smaller scaled sites and projects that could benefit from pooled resources such as joint parking resources. This type of resource could act as a catalyst for positive infill or rehabilitation projects on smaller sites.

***William Justen*** – As a longtime Downtown resident with a passion for in-city living, he echoes the desire for improved living environments and a more balanced neighborhood. He'd like us to think up some bold ideas and "big solutions" that are outside the box. He knows the frustrations of dealing with the social issues, and that dilapidated buildings contribute to bad energy. He advocates for both positive reuse of existing buildings and new infill development.

***Katherine Olson*** – As a Downtown library volunteer, she is aware of the positive benefits of community and excitement that new buildings and new architectural design can bring. She'd recommend looking at European cities such as Rotterdam and Amsterdam for ways to incorporate new designs in ways that will create excitement, while respecting the existing character as well.

***Sunny Speidel*** – Would like for Pioneer Square to be a "world-class historic district." She is ready for creative thinking, and enhancements that would eliminate the day-to-day frustrations that residents and visitors can experience. She's looking for an integrated and diverse neighborhood with lots of people on the street, a neighborhood that continues to have authenticity.

***Quang Nguyen*** – Speaking for Little Saigon, he'd like to see the area become more vibrant and more integrated into the area's economy – a place where everyone can come to live, recreate and work in. At the same time, he wants the continued ability for businesses not to be displaced, so that entrepreneurs can continue to pursue the American Dream. He summarizes the overall comments of the group as falling into the categories of: economic vitality and opportunity; enhanced livability; dealing with transportation accessibility; addressing historic preservation issues; and promoting a community spirit.

***Bo Lam*** – As a business owner and taxpayer, he notes the damaged streets and poor lighting in his area and the other neighborhoods. He'd like to see better support for businesses, particularly with those sorts of infrastructure improvements that will make a difference and improve the function and overall attractive quality of the neighborhoods.

***Alan Kurimura*** – Three mixed use (housing, office, retail, services) neighborhoods (PS, ID, LS) with unique differences and identities. All bound together by pedestrian and vehicular links. All with access/egress routes. Each with open spaces; plus one large, central open space for all. At

street level, emphasis on wide sidewalks, bright pedestrian lighting, sidewalk trees, traffic control devices, buses and trolleys, and overall attractive and safe environment. Rehabilitation, restoration and reuse of historic structures (particularly King Street Station) and infill new construction. Mix of owner and renter housing of varying densities. Services to support residents. Hotels, restaurants and other uses supporting tourists and businesses. In evenings, people (residents, visitors, tourists) are on the sidewalks and patronizing restaurants, cultural, educational, entertainment and service establishments. On weekends there are neighborhood events, shows, etc.

### **South Downtown Planning Study Context**

Gordon Clowers summarized key dates in the area's growth and planning history, to set the context.

- A follow-up comment asked that the City bear in mind the needs of the industrial area to the south.
- Another comment noted the desire to extend the streetcar system further through the Chinatown/I.D. community and beyond.

### **Role, Schedule of Advisory Group**

Susan briefed the group on the next steps of the process and how input would be sought. The variety of contributing issues such as public safety will be recorded and discussed to some extent, but primarily will be directed to the City's interdepartmental team for further discussion.

The following topics were suggested as of interest to the group, for further discussion:

- access/mobility and transportation network issues;
- learning from pertinent examples in other cities;
- public safety; and
- infrastructure needs to serve expected growth

### **Adjourn**